

**Prayer Supplement
For Shabbat Services At
Congregation L'Dor V'Dor
Little Neck, New York
Preliminary Edition
August 2016**

The Prayer Experience

(Passages to read before services begin or before a silent devotion)

A fulfilling encounter with Jewish prayer should help you to:

- Experience God in terms that are emotionally and spiritually compelling as well as intellectually satisfying.
- Feel a unity with all Jews, everywhere, past, present and future.
- Gain a sense of inspiration from Jewish tradition.
- Understand yourself as an individual, as a Jew and as a human being.
- Open pathways to joy.

To pray is so necessary and so hard. Hard not because it requires intellect or knowledge or a big vocabulary, but because it requires of us humility. And that comes, I think, from a profound sense of one's brokenness, and one's need. Not the need that causes us to cry, "Get me out of this trouble, quick!" but the need that one feels every day of one's life – even though one does not acknowledge it – to be related to something bigger than one's self, something more alive than one's self, something older and something not yet born, that will endure through time.

Do not think that the words of prayer – as you say them – go up to God

It is not the words themselves that ascend;

It is rather the burning desire of your heart that rises like smoke toward heaven.

If your prayer consists only of words and letters, and does not contain your heart's desire – how can it rise up to God?

Prayer Is...

- Prayer is a step on which we rise from the self we are, to the self we wish to be.
- Prayer affirms the hope that no reality can crush; the aspiration that can never acknowledge defeat.
- Prayer seeks the power to do wisely, to act generously, to live helpfully.
- Prayer is the search for silence amidst the noise of life.
- Prayer takes us beyond the self.
- Joining our little self to the selfhood of humanity, prayer gives our wishes the freedom to grow large and broad and inclusive.
- Our prayers are answered not when we are given what we ask, but when we are challenged to be what we can be.

Inner Devotion

Abraham Joshua Heschel

When you pray, know before whom you stand. In prayer there is the danger of relying on the word, of depending upon the text, of forgetting that the word is a challenge to the soul rather than a substitute for the outburst of the heart....

Prayer, as a way of speaking, is a way that leads nowhere. The text must never be more important than inner devotion. The life of prayer depends not so much upon loyalty to custom as upon inner participation; not so much upon the length as upon the depth of the service.

Those who run precipitately through the liturgy, rushing in and out of the prayer texts, as if the task were to cover a maximum of space in a minimum of time, will derive little from worship. To be able to pray is to know how to stand still and to dwell upon a word. This is how some worshippers of the past would act: "They would repeat the same word many times, because they loved and cherished it so much that they could not part from it."

There is a classical principle in regard to prayer: "Better is a little with inner devotion than much without it."

A Statement of Faith

Inscription on the walls of a cellar in Cologne, Germany where Jews hid from the Nazis

"I believe in the sun even when it is not shining.
I believe in love even when feeling it not.
I believe in God even when God is silent."

Purpose of Prayer

Samson Raphael Hirsch

The aim of our worship is the purification, enlightenment and uplifting of our inner selves... Its aim is not simply to stir up the emotions, or to produce fleeting moments of devotion, empty sentimentalism and idle tears, but the cleansing of heart and mind. Life robs us of the correct judgment concerning God, the world, humankind, and Israel, and concerning our own relationship to them all. Leaving the disturbing influences of life, and turning to God, you can find it again through the contemplation that is part of prayer.

...contemplate afresh our prayers, our divine service as a whole, and see if you do not find it more dignified, meaningful and important than you had ever before imagined.

Heart's Desire

Wolf of Zhitomir

Do not think that the words of prayer as you say them go up to God.
It is not the words themselves that ascend;
It is rather the burning desire of your heart that rises like smoke toward heaven.
If your prayer consist only of words and letters, and does not contain your heart's desire,
How can it rise up to God?

The Sense of the Mysterious

Albert Einstein

The most beautiful and deepest experience one can have is the sense of the mysterious... One who has never had this experience seems to me if not dead, then at least blind. To sense that behind anything that can be experienced there is a something that our mind cannot grasp and whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly and as a feeble reflection, this is religiousness. In *this* sense I am religious.

A Morning Blessing To Be Recited Just After The Barchu

O God, you have created us in your image and have made us to share in your work of Creation. You have given to each generation the task to shape the future of humankind. May our gratitude for all the beauty, order and power that reveal you in nature impel us to serve you. May nothing that we do mar the holiness of life by causing any fellow creature to lose the joy of living. May all our acts conform with your law and bring blessing to us and to all whose lives touch ours. Cause your light to shine upon us that we may walk in your way. Blessed are you, O God, Creator of the cosmic lights.

A Guided Amida (Silent Devotion)

Avot: Peoplehood

We call to mind the lives of our ancient fathers and mothers, asking ourselves:
How can we be challenged and motivated by their examples?

Meditate on this question and then recite the blessing:

Baruch atah Adonai, Magen Avraham u-Fo-ked Sarah.

*Be praised, Eternal One, protector of our ancestors
whose presence is manifest in our bond with our matriarchs and patriarchs.*

Gevurot: Powers

God and God's power is the source of all life.

*Meditate on the awesome reality of life and God's powerful role
as the source of vibrancy within your life and within all of God's creation.*

Baruch atah Adonai, M'cha-yay et HaKol

Be praised, Eternal One, who gives vibrancy and life to all beings.

Kedushat Ha-Shem: Holiness

To be holy is to be unique, special, different and set aside for goodness.

It is written in the Book of Leviticus:

"I the Lord your God am holy, therefore you must be holy as well."

We sanctify God by being holy ourselves.

Meditate on the questions:

What do I do in my life that is holy?

How can I bring holiness to God's name?

Baruch atah Adonai, Ha-El Ha-Kadosh

Be praised, Eternal One, who achieves holiness when we bring holiness to our lives.

Kedushat Ha-Yom: Shabbat

Achad Ha-Am once said:

More than the Jewish People have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jewish People.

Meditate on the questions:

How do I sanctify Shabbat and thereby turn a regular day into a special day?

How does my observance of Shabbat contribute to the strength of my Jewish identity?

Baruch atah Adonai, M'ka-desh Ha-Shabbat

Be praised, Eternal One, whose Presence is manifest in our search for Shabbat holiness.

Avodah:

Worship of God as part of the Jewish People from within our homeland of Eretz Yisrael

Focus on Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

Meditate on the following:

What does it mean when we pray "for God's presence to return to Zion."

What is our connection to the land and the people of Israel?

Baruch atah Adonai, Ha-Ma-cha-zir Sh'chi-na-to l'Tzion

Be praised, Eternal One, for whose presence we yearn to return to Jerusalem.

Ho-da-ah: Gratitude

How important it is to be grateful for the miracles we experience each and every day.

*Take some time to give thanks for blessings in your life
which at times can be overlooked or taken for granted.*

Baruch atah Adonai, Ha-Tov Shimcha ul'cha na-eh l'hodot

Be praised, Eternal One, whose presence we meet when we recognize the blessings in our lives.

Shalom: Peace

God makes peace in the universe, we pray for that same peace to embrace our world.

Meditate on this question:

How can we be God's partners each day and help to bring peace and healing to our broken world?

Baruch atah Adonai, O-seh Ha-Shalom

Be praised, Eternal One, whose presence is manifest in our pursuit of peace.

Shabbat Shalom!

(Kavanot to be recited before Kiddush or before the beginning of Friday Night Services)

Shabbat is a day of:

- Rest and renewal for the soul.
- Release from the worldly concerns of the six-day work week.
- Contemplating with gratitude the beauty and wonder of Creation.
- Clarifying our vision of a better world and renewing our resolve to bring it about.

Shabbat – A Necessary Element to the “Painting of Life”

Mordecai Kaplan

An artist cannot be continually wielding a brush. Artists must stop at times in their painting to freshen their vision of the object, the meaning of which they wish to express on canvas.

Living is can be compared to painting on a canvass.

The Sabbath represents those moments when we pause in our brushwork to renew our vision of this object. Having done so we take ourselves to our painting with clarified vision and renewed energy. This applies to the individual and to the community alike.

Shabbat – Beyond Civilization

Abraham Joshua Heschel

The Sabbath is the day on which we learn the art of surpassing civilization. We set apart one day a week for freedom, ad on which we do not use the instruments which have so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence from external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, ad day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow human beings and the forces of nature – is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for our human progress than the Sabbath?

Shabbat

Shabbat is a symbol of liberation, a symbol of triumph,
Shabbat is a symbol of the holy over that which is mundane,
A symbol of spirit over matter.

Shabbat has never been merely a day of rest from labor.
It has always been a break in the drab routine of everyday life.

In every age, Shabbat has afforded the Jew a holy retreat, a haven of safety,
A fountain of strength and renewal.

Shabbat nurtures family life in love and harmony.
Shabbat unites husband and wife, parent and child.

Not only work is a desecration of Shabbat, but strife, anger and
All that disturbs the peace within our homes
Is also Shabbat desecration.

Shabbat is our hope, the calm haven where all the weary find rest.
With the coming of Shabbat, redemption and peace enter the world.

Shabbat brings release from the mundane
And engagement with that which is holy.
To observe a complete Shabbat
Is to get a glimpse of the peace and harmony of the Messianic Age.

As we observe the Sabbath Day and keep it holy,
May the holiness of Shabbat touch our souls
And bring holiness and peace to our lives.

Amen

Special Blessings After “Modim”

At this point in the Amida one may add blessings that express gratitude for various particular circumstances; a number of such blessings can be found below.

Each bracha should begin with:

I thankfully acknowledge You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the Universe, ...

...on the first day of spring, and other calendric occasions:

You continuously transform one season into another.

...upon having a special insight:

You share Your wisdom with human beings.

...when feeling awe at God's creations:

The universe declares Your presence and glory.

...when feeling awareness of God's bounty:

Your loving kindness fills the whole world.

...when marveling at a particular tree or person or ... :

Your world has amazing beings.

...to acknowledge or celebrate each and every creation:

You have created all sorts of beings.

...to express satisfaction with our lives:

You have enriched me with my share.

...to express appreciation for one's community:

You have blessed me with a supportive community.

...to express gratitude for the gift of acceptance:

You help us accept things that we cannot change.

...to express gratitude for a new development in one's life:

You have kept us alive, and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this special day.

(Prayers To Be Recited Upon The Completion Of The Amida Or At The End Of A Service)

Our Situation Here

Albert Einstein

Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know:...that we are here for the sake of each other, above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellows, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received and am still receiving.

A Prayer for Understanding

God of peace, be with us, you who guide the destinies of the world, so that an end may come to chauvinistic boasting. May the reign of arrogance dwindle in our time. Give us the courage to speak the truth and the humility to listen. Help us all to put the good of our fellows above our own ambitions and the truth which does not profit us above the lie which does. So may we stand upright, freed from the burden of fear and the weight of suspicion, learning to trust each other. Help each one of us to bring our own offering of understanding and our own sacrifice for peace so that we are at peace with ourselves and live in peace with those around us. Then in tranquility may we all go forward to build your kingdom in the world until the earth shall be filled with your knowledge as the waters cover the sea.

Smooth Talk

Maimonides

It is forbidden for people to accustom themselves to use smooth and deceptive language. We should not say one thing when we mean another, but our inner thoughts should be in accord with the impression we give, and our mouth should utter that which we really think. Even one word of smooth talk or misrepresentation is forbidden, but a person should have true lips, a sincere spirit and a heart free of any trickery and deceit.

A Prayer of Thanks

Siddur Vetaher Libenu

Thank you, God of Eternity, for the great wonder of your creation, for the earth, the stars, the sun and the moon, and the beauty of your universe, with which in your great kindness you have blessed me. Thank you for granting me life, in all its richness, for its brilliant moments of joy which allow me to soar as the birds, and even for its anguish and pain, which somehow seem to precipitate inner growth and change. For all these things, God, I am grateful.

But thank you, especially, God, in your abundant love for having chosen to make me a human being, blessed among all the fruits of your creation, with a mind to reason and seek truth and justice; with a soul which can feel pain, ecstasy and compassion, and has the freedom to choose life and goodness over cruelty and destruction; and with a heart which can love and care and reach out to touch the hearts of my brothers and sisters as together we walk through the years of our lives.

Prayer for the Future

Judy Chicago

We pray for:

A time when all that has divided us will merge, compassion will be wedded to power and softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind.

A time when both men and women will be gentle and both women and men will be strong.

A Time when no person will be subject to another's will and the greed of some will give way to the needs of many.

A time when all will share equally in the earth's abundance and all will care for the sick and the weak and the old.

A time when all will nourish the young and cherish life's creatures.

A time when all will live in harmony with each other and the earth; when everywhere will be called Eden once again.

A Family Prayer

J. Harry Berger

*O God, we come so often with needs to be satisfied.
We come to you now in gratitude for what we have and are.*

*Help us to make our home a sanctuary, warmed by reverence, adorned by tradition,
With family bonds that are strong and enduring, based on love, truth trust and affection.*

*Grant us gratitude enough to look backward and be thankful;
courage enough to look forward and be hopeful;
faith enough to look upward and be humble;
kindness enough to look outward and be helpful.*

*And in the week ahead, help us to live the words we pray,
So that all that we have done be found good and worthy of your blessing.*

Birdsong

He doesn't know the world at all who stays in his nest and doesn't go out.
He doesn't know what birds know best, Nor what I want to sing about,
That the world is full of loveliness.

When dewdrops sparkle in the grass and earth's aflood with morning light,
A blackbird sings upon a bush to greet the dawning after night.
Then I know how fine it is to live.

Hey, try to open up your heart to beauty;
Go to the woods someday and wave a wreath of memory there.
Then if the tears obscure your way you'll know how wonderful it is to be alive!

Closing Prayer – End of Amida

E-lo-hai, My God:

As I Leave Your presence
I remind myself that it is I,
not You, who is leaving,
for You are always present in my life.
When I take a deep breath,
I can find You again,
for You are only a breath away.
When I picture Your light, and turn toward
it,
my darkness is dispelled,
for in Your light I see light.
When my soul utters a prayer,
I know that You hear me,
for You are always receptive to prayer.

E-lo-hai, My God:

Help me recognize and acknowledge
all the blessings that You provide;
for when I express my gratitude
I am reminded of Your presence.
Help me remember that You created
everything,
that the world does not revolve around
me;
for when I express my humility,

I am reminded of Your presence.
Help me ask You for guidance and
assistance,
and affirm that You
make a difference in my life;
for when I express my dependence,
I am reminded of Your presence.

Shi-vi-ti A-do-nai l'neg-di ta-mid

Help me keep Your presence
directly in my field of vision
at each and every moment.

V'shav-ti b'veit A-do-nai L'o-rech ya-mim

Help me choose to live each day
in Your house,
to feel Your presence
all the days of my life.

Yih-yu l'ra-tzon im-rei fi, v'heg-yon

li-bi l'fa-neh-cha A-do-nai tzu-ri v'go-a-li.

You are my rock, source of my strength.
You Are My Redeemer,
source of my hope.

And You accept, with love and joy,
the words of my mouth
and the meditations of my heart.
And that is so. Amen.

Petitionary Prayer

Does petitionary prayer work? Many people have a “cosmic candy machine” view of religion: If you insert the correct prayer into the slot, your request will be fulfilled; If you pray wholeheartedly for victory, your team will win the football game. Our perspective is rather that God's blessings, guidance and assistance are always flowing to us, that no special effort on God's part is required to direct that flow to us. However, we must position ourselves to receive the flow, we must make a special effort to receive it - and that is to acknowledge our need for that blessing, to say “God, please help me!” When we ask for God's help, God's help is present! In that sense, petitionary prayer always works. Do we always get what we want? Clearly not, for each one of us is mortal, though some of us may prefer to live forever. But through prayer, through speaking to God, we can find the spiritual resources to deal with life's problems.

“BaYom Ha-hu: On That Day”

To be read during Aleinu

On that day, everyone will realize that all of the truths that we adhere to are interpretations of one Truth, that all of the gods to which we pray are manifestations of one God, that all of the peoples to which we belong are variations of one People.

On that day, we will realize that none of us has achieved our vision, that none of us truly has truly articulated God's redemption, and we will begin to look for a new common vision and new metaphors of redemption.

On that day, we will form one congregation -- *agudah achat* -- to do Your will whole-heartedly.

On that day, we will realize that we, individually and collectively, are not and cannot be the rulers of the world, that the world is entrusted to our management and stewardship, roles which have a prerequisite of humility.

On that day, we will respect the many different paths to God, and remove the disrespect from our own paths.

On that day, we will understand that each of us, and all of our peoples, are part of a whole which transcends the sum of its parts.

On that day, we will have a "new heart", one that is not made of stone but of flesh, when God's new covenant will be an organic part of us, not etched unchangingly and intolerantly in our "hearts of stone".

On that day, we will all live together, each tending our own gardens, each according to their needs and deeds, the lion living with the lamb, each unafraid.

On that day, the world will be mended, since all will be involved in mending the world.

On that day, in the words of the psalmist, the earth will be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea. "On that day, God will be one, and God's name will be one."

A Prayer for Israel

Israel fulfills our hope,
nurtured faithfully for two thousand years
to be a free people in our own land.

Israel represents our vision,
of a state that embodies Jewish values,
pursuing Justice and peace for all its people.

We reaffirm our commitment
to that hope and that vision.

We see Israel as an ordinary nation,
its people fully enjoying God's bounty;
and we see Israel as exceptional,
serving as a light unto the nations.

We will hold fast to our dreams and visions,
even as fanatics try to shatter them.

We pray that the violence will cease,
that destruction will give way to rebuilding.
We pray that everyone will realize that
hatred and hostility cannot lead to a solution.

We affirm that it is possible
for Jews and Arabs, for Palestinians and Israelis,
and for Jews and Jews,
to work together to build a shared future.

We affirm that, in the end, peace is the only way,
and that ultimately all will realize this truth.

We pray that that day will come soon,
that leaders will blaze a new path to peace,
and will lead others along that path.

May Israel survive and thrive,
and bask in the glow of an "*or chadash*,"
of a new light of peace.